That which is claimed is:

1. A device for singulating articles from a bulk supply of such articles, comprising:

a housing for holding articles to be singulated;

an exit channel fluidly connected to the housing and configured in cross-section to permit the passage of a single article at a time, the exit channel including a forwardly-directed jet aperture and a rearwardly directed jet aperture being located upstream of the forwardly directed aperture;

a first positive pressure source fluidly connected to the forwardly-directed jet;

a second positive pressure source fluidly connected to the rearwardly-directed jet; and

a controller operatively connected with the first and second positive pressure sources that selectively controls the application of positive pressure to the forwardly-directed jet apertures.

2. The device defined in Claim 1, further comprising a sensor operatively associated with the controller that detects articles passing through the exit channel.

3. The device defined in Claim 1, further comprising a second forwardly-directed jet aperture located downstream of the rearwardly-directed aperture, the forwardly-directed aperture being fluidly connected with a third positive pressure source and with the controller.

4. The device defined in Claim 3, wherein the first, second and third positive pressure sources are coincident.

5. The device defined in Claim 1, wherein the first and second positive pressure sources are coincident.

6. The device defined in Claim 1, wherein the housing includes a jet aperture directed toward the exit channel, the jet being fluidly connected to a fourth positive pressure source, the fourth positive pressure source being operatively connected to the controller.

7. The device defined in Claim 1, wherein the housing includes a floor and an opposing ceiling, and wherein the floor includes a first foraminous member and the ceiling includes a second foraminous member.

8. The device defined in Claim 1, further comprising an article-orienting member positioned upstream of the exit channel.

9. The device defined in Claim 1, wherein said first positive pressure source and said forwardly-directed jet aperture are configured to direct a jet of between about 1 and 500 psi into the exit channel.

10. The device defined in Claim 1, wherein said second positive pressure source and said rearwardly-directed jet aperture are configured to direct a jet of between about 1 and 500 psi into the exit channel.

11. The device defined in Claim 6, wherein the housing jet aperture and the fourth positive pressure source are configured to directed a jet of between about 1 and 500 psi toward the exit channel.

12. The device defined in Claim 1, further comprising a plurality of substantially identical articles to be singulated, the articles being stored in the housing.

13. An article-orienting singulating device, comprising:

a housing;

an exit channel attached to and fluidly connected with the housing;

an article-orienting unit that includes a pair of panels, each of which includes an upstream end and a downstream end, positioned with their downstream ends adjacent an upstream portion of the exit channel; and

wherein the pair of panels and the exit channel upstream portion define an entry space that permits an oblong article to enter only in a longitudinal orientation in which the longest dimension thereof is generally parallel to a downstream flow path; and wherein the pair of panels and the exit channel upstream portion are spaced such that an oblong article that enters the entry space in a transverse orientation in which its longest dimension is generally perpendicular to the downstream flow path and that strikes the exit channel upstream portion is caused to re-orient itself to a longitudinal orientation and pass into the exit channel.

14. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 13, wherein the panels are generally parallel with each other.

15. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 14, further comprising a third panel extending between the panels upstream of the exit channel.

16. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 13, wherein the panels are pivotally attached to each other such that pivotal movement of the panels relative to one another varies the configuration of the entry space.

17. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 13, further comprising a plurality of substantially identical articles to be singulated, the articles being stored in the housing.

18. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 17, wherein the articles are generally oblong and have a longitudinal dimension, a first transverse dimension and a second transverse dimension that is less than the longitudinal dimension and greater than the first transverse dimension, and wherein the entry space is defined by a first distance and a second distance larger than and perpendicular to the first distance, and wherein the first distance is greater than the first transverse dimension and less than the smaller of the second transverse dimension and two times the first transverse dimension, and the second distance is greater than the second transverse dimension and less than the smaller of the longitudinal dimension and two times the second transverse dimension, such that articles may pass into the exit channel through the article-orienting unit one at a time in a longitudinal orientation in which the first transverse dimension is generally parallel with the first distance, and the second transverse dimension is generally parallel with the second distance.

19. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 17, wherein the articles are generally oblong and have a longitudinal dimension, a first transverse dimension and a second transverse dimension that is less than the longitudinal dimension and greater than the first transverse dimension, and wherein the entry space is defined by a first distance and a second distance larger than and perpendicular to the first distance, and wherein the first distance is greater than the second transverse dimension and less than the smaller of the longitudinal dimension and two times the first transverse dimension, and the second distance is greater than the second transverse dimension and less than the smaller of the longitudinal dimension and two times the first transverse dimension, such that articles may pass through the article-orienting device into the exit channel one at a time in multiple longitudinal orientations

20. The article-orienting singulating device defined in Claim 17, wherein the exit channel is sized and configured such that only one article can pass through any cross-section thereof at a time.

21. A device for singulating articles from a bulk supply of such articles, comprising:

a housing for holding articles to be singulated;

an exit channel fluidly connected to the housing and configured in cross-section to permit the passage of a single article at a time;

a jet aperture positioned in the housing and directed toward the exit channel;

a positive pressure source fluidly connected to the jet aperture; and

a controller operatively connected to the positive pressure source that selectively controls the application of positive pressure to the jet aperture.

22. The device defined in Claim 20, wherein the housing includes a floor and an opposing ceiling, and wherein the floor includes a first foraminous member and the ceiling includes a second foraminous member, and further comprising an air flow source that draws air into the housing through the first foraminous member and out of the housing through the second foraminous member.

23. The device defined in Claim 21, further comprising a plurality of substantially identical articles to be singulated, wherein application of the air flow source causes the articles to be suspended within the housing.

24. A method of singulating items of substantially identical size and configuration from a bulk of such items stored in a housing, comprising the steps of:

providing a singulating device comprising a housing and an exit channel fluidly connected thereto, the exit channel defining a flow path;

applying a forwardly-directed jet into the exit channel;

passing a series of articles in single file into the exit channel;

accelerating articles in the exit channel with the forwardly-directed jet;

counting the number of articles that pass a predetermined point in the exit channel;

comparing the number of articles that have passed the predetermined point with a predetermined number; and

applying a rearwardly-directed jet into the exit channel after a predetermined number of articles have passed the predetermined point to draw any additional articles in the exit channel back into the housing.

25. The method defined in Claim 24, further comprising the step of applying a jet within the housing toward the exit chamber to encourage the travel of articles toward the exit chamber.

26. The method defined in Claim 24, further comprising the step of deactivating the forwardly-directed jet when the predetermined number of articles is reached.

27. The method defined in Claim 24, further comprising the step of passing air through the housing to suspend the articles stored therein prior to the passing step.

28. The method defined in Claim 24, further comprising the steps of pulsing at least one of the forwardly-directed jet and the rearwardly-directed jet to clear a jam in the exit channel.